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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World, Fédération européene des femmes actives au foyer, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Femmes Afrique solidarité, Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, International Association of Gerontology, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women's International Zionist Organization, Women's World Summit Foundation, World Movement of Mothers, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and Worldwide Organization for Women, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

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Statement

We, the above named Non Governmental Organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, through our report on girls' infanticide and female feticide that will be presented and distributed during the CSW in its 51st session and this statement, reaffirm and call attention to the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of the girl child. Despite the legal human rights framework and namely the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), we are deeply concerned with the phenomena of girl infanticide and female feticide, which deny the girl-child the most basic human right, the right to be born. Not only has the status of the girl-child not improved but in many regions of the world, it has worsened and its future is threatened.

Girl infanticide, killing a baby girl at or very soon after birth, is a traditional practice in some parts of Asia.

Female feticide is a modern version of infanticide which consists of killing a female fetus via sex-selective abortions. Female feticide, which has rapidly increased over the last decade, is even more perverse than girl infanticide in that modern technology has made it easier, more silent and an industry has developed to promote it.

Both these practices are based on the traditional belief that a girl is less valuable than a boy, and therefore is not worth living. Mainly due to cultural, religious or social factors and practices, such as dowry requirements and inheritance laws, having a girl-child is still considered a burden or a failure in many countries. There is no rational explanation for this phenomenon, given the knowledge that sex-selective abortions are even more common in wealthier and educated families.

The magnitude of this human rights violation is building to a worrisome demographic imbalance with economical and social consequences worldwide:

- Killing of girls in the most populated countries means fewer wives and mothers and in turn, fewer girls and mothers for future generations resulting into a greater imbalance in the number of men and women in the world. Over 100 million women are missing[i], which will result in a 12 to 15 per cent excess of young men in the next twenty years and therefore a bride shortage. For example, between 2015 and 2030, 25 million Chinese men will have no hope of finding a wife[ii].

- Trafficking of girls and women across borders, states and within communities is developing at an alarmingly high speed. This only enhances the traditional power structure detrimental to women: becoming seen as a commodity and therefore holding less value. The "paros" phenomenon or the import of "women from the outside" sadly illustrates this situation as girls are easily bought- and the younger the girl, the higher the price.

- Forced marriages are increasing dramatically, in some cases forcing young women into marrying and belonging to several men at the same time.

The phenomena of girl infanticide and female feticide are alarming and this is the reason why we are calling upon the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in its 51st session focusing on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child to:

- reaffirm the equal dignity of men and women, and especially the right to be born

We also call upon the UN CSW to request political commitment from governments to:

- strengthen and implement laws against girls' infanticide

- amend laws that create and support the conditions where women are seen as a burden, such as inheritance laws and dowry requirements

- create an environment favorable to girls, for example by giving allowances to families who welcome girls

- provide education on gender equality

- support good local initiatives from NGOs which support families with girl children from pregnancy onwards

Madame Chair, nothing can justify the mass-killing, torture, ill-treatment or sale of girls. We expect that at this UN CSW, a recommendation will be adopted to address this deplorable situation.

i Isabelle Attané, "L'Asie manque de femmes", http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2006/07/ATTANE/13601 JUILLET 2006 - Pages 2, 16 et 17.

ii Isabelle Attané, Demographie et Sinologue, chargee de recherces a l'Institut national d'etudes demographiques (INED), Paris, Une Chine sans femmes? Perrin, Paris, 2005.

Note:

Statement also endorsed by Institute for Family Policy, NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva and Working Group on the Girl Child